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SUBJECT: BRAZIL EMBARKS ON PROGRAM TO IMPROVE MANAGEMENT OF
NATIONAL PARKS AND USG IS HELPING

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The relatively new Brazilian Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio), the agency responsible for national parks and protected area system, has launched a program to improve its park management. It seeks to introduce public use plans for its parks, and the USG is providing technical support for this effort. The U.S. Forest Service provided an expert on special uses, permits and concessions to a recent ICMBio workshop of park managers in Foz do Iguassu and is hosting visits by key ICMBio officials. The introduction of effective public use planning and the development of concession plans should help generate revenues to support ICMBio's activities as well as improve public access to protected areas around Brazil. These activities will also promote reducing deforestation and conserving biodiversity. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

¶2. (SBU) ICMBio was created in 2007 and manages a large number of parks and protected areas, covering over 20% of Brazil's territory. ICMBio is attempting to prepare or review concession plans for ten priority national parks by the end of 2009. In September 2008, Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva announced the "Tourism in Parks" Program, which details the various actions and activities that will be implemented by both the Ministry of Environment (MMA) and the Ministry of Tourism (MT) in order to increase the number of visitors in the country's national parks. For the first part of the Program, the Government of Brazil will invest approximately USD 11.5 million. MMA and MT will be responsible for investing USD 7 million and USD 4.5 million, respectively, for the improvement of park infrastructure such as trails, camping areas, and also larger structures such as roads and airports in remote areas.

USG SUPPORT

¶3. (SBU) Iguassu National Park is Brazil's most visited and best developed park. It also is unique with its concession contract, which provides for a hotel and numerous recreational activities. The first concession contract was signed in December of 1998 for a fifteen-year period. After the conclusion of the recent economic feasibility study for Iguassu, a five-year extension was agreed upon. USAID funded this economic feasibility study and also funded a similar study for the Fernando de Noronha Marine National Park.

¶4. (SBU) Participants in the April 1 Seminar included ICMBio's legal counsel and environmental analysts working on park management activities. Presentations were about the legal aspect of Brazil's concession system and the concessionaires' perspective of the partnership. In response to a request from ICMBio's Director of Public Uses, Julio Gonchorosky, U.S Forest Service and Embassy

representatives provided supported for the seminar Gonchorosky is seeking to develop a partnership with the USG in protected areas management.

15. (SBU) USFS sent Robert Kates ,a Special Uses Program Manager, to give a presentation on the history of concessions in the United States' protected areas. Kates explained the current U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service concession process, as well as challenges faced and lessons learned. He also participated on a panel with Gonchorosky, Guilherme Martin (head of public uses for Argentina National Parks) and Camila Rodrigues (Brazilian Ministry of the Environment Protected Areas Specialist) on concessions.

16. (SBU) The U.S. Forest Service coordinated a technical visit to provide additional support for Brazil's efforts with protected areas management. In May and June, 2009, two key ICMBio coordinators from the Office of Public Use under the Directory of Protected Areas visited the United States for technical field trips and meetings for a three week period. The main purpose of the visit was to get familiar with the work of the U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service with an emphasis on economic modeling, development of concessions, monitoring of special uses permits and concessions and the overall supervision of concession activities. Upon their return, they will now help train ICMBio staff in preparation for the development of Brazil's national concession plans as well as the development of the Scope of Work for an upcoming U.S. Forest Service technical visit to Brazil.

17. (SBU) At the end of July, 2009, Gonchorosky will lead a small team from ICMBio in a technical visit to the United States to better understand the challenges faced by the different agencies responsible for the management of parks, forests and wildlife reserves. The main topics of discussion will include visitation, concessions, concession services monitoring, infrastructure, protection, research, access to remote protected areas and human

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resource allocation. Moreover, in September 2009, U.S. Forest Service experts will come to Brazil for a three week period to assist the Brazilians in the process of evaluating ICMBio's needs as they are establishing the appropriate public uses for various protected areas. This U.S. Forest Service team will work with ICMBio to develop a three year workplan, which will provide guidance on activities such as concession planning, monitoring, management, overall capacity building, and project development. Also this team will strengthen the relationship between the U.S. Forest Service and ICMBio. In addition, the U.S. Forest Service is collaborating with Colorado State University to develop a workshop and provide speakers during Brazil's Protected Area Congress. The three-day workshop will provide training on Public Use Planning.

18. (SBU) COMMENT: Brazil is taking positive steps as it develops its protected areas policies. The partnership between ICMBio and the U.S Forest Service and the National Park Service has good prospects for being very fruitful. The Brazilians are looking to the United States for technical expertise to help them move in the right direction and avoid repeating our mistakes in this field. Fortunately, the USG is able to respond positively. END COMMENT
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